



## INTELLIGENCE NOTE

BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

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## THE SOVIETS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT: AFTER STOCKHOLM

Media Critical. Soviet media references to the UN Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm June 5-16, have not been numerous, but have followed a substantially critical line. They have emphasized Soviet pique over exclusion of the GDR, which led to the boycott of the Conference by the USSR and all of its allies except Romania. In June, New Times (Issue 26) commented that the Conference "could have played a big role in eliminating the dangers facing humanity had all states been given an equal chance to participate..." Izvestiya of June 22 made a similar point. The New Times article, also, in a rare reference to the substance of the Conference, commented that serious differences preceded adoption of the Declaration of Principles and that the Western press had been critical of the conference results.

These same Soviet commentaries also noted the criticism of US "destruction of the natural environment in Indo-China" voiced at the conference by Swedish Prime Minister Palme and others (but without mentioning the even more strident attacks by Peking). In a July 1 broadcast, commentator

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Boris Belitskiy argued, further, that a "first step in protecting the environment must of course be the halting of the American war in Vietnam" and that "halting the arms race would provide the most funds" for protecting the environment.

Soviet UN Mission Noncommittal. During an informal discussion in New York on July 25, Soviet Ambassador Issraelyan indicated a lack of instructions, but he did reflect Soviet unhappiness regarding some aspects of the conference recommendations for UN institutional arrangements. He repeated familiar Soviet objections to formation of "new bodies" such as the Environmental Coordinating Board and to the establishment of a potentially independent (and expensive) Executive Director. His concern over the proposed 54-member Governing Council for environmental programs, however, seemed to revolve principally around the related handling of the German question; he raised no objection to the Governing Council per se. Moreover, Issraelyan seemed worried over a reported rumor that the Soviets are no longer interested in environmental protection and took pains to point out evidence of continued Soviet interest. (Maurice Strong reportedly received some assurance also of Soviet willingness in principle to approach environmental problems through the UN before he accepted the post of Secretary General at Stockholm.)

Probable Soviet Positions. As comments by the media and Issraelyan suggest, the Soviets probably still regard environmental questions as subordinate to more general political considerations. While they have

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demonstrated increasing public concern with domestic ecological problems -- e.g., in Lake Baikal, the Volga River, and the Sea of Azov -- on the international scene they still seem to view environmental protection primarily as an issue for diplomatic exploitation (by or against the USSR), and as one they prefer to handle in a bilateral or perhaps regional context. Issraelyan's lack of instructions also suggests that a detailed review may be underway in Moscow of the various Stockholm resolutions, and perhaps of overall Soviet policy on international environmental issues with regard to their handling in the UN and other fora.

Given the conflict between the Soviets' boycott and denunciation of the Conference, on the one hand, and their desire to show a favorable public record on environmental issues, on the other, it would be logical for them to abstain on the upcoming UN General Assembly vote concerning the Stockholm Declaration of Principles, particularly since it would be a largely pro forma noting of the conference resolution. In this connection the Soviets might assert that the reference in the Declaration's Preamble to the "duty of all governments" has been contradicted by the non-universality of the Conference, which they so strenuously deplored. They might wish, furthermore, to avoid even the limited commitment to international responsibility for environmental damage and related economic assistance set forth in the Declaration. Abstention would help the Soviets finesse all these problems, and perhaps give them some cause for satisfaction over their absence from Stockholm.

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On the other hand, the Soviets would probably oppose outright -- in its present form anyway -- the resolution requiring states to provide information "on activities or developments within their jurisdiction...whenever they believe, or have reason to believe, that such information is needed to avoid the risk of significant adverse effects on the environment in areas beyond their national jurisdiction." This proposal was referred to the General Assembly after opposition, largely from Brazil, prevented its adoption at the Conference; even though it leaves the decision up to the individual government, it is the sort of undertaking which conflicts strongly with the Soviet penchant for secrecy.

Regarding the Stockholm proposals for UN institutional arrangements, the Soviets will probably feel required to take a more active role. (Simultaneous, and perhaps more intense, efforts in bilateral and regional contexts like the CSCE are not to be excluded, however.) Issraelyan's discussion of the Governing Council suggested that the Soviet Union regards the question of German representation as a matter of principle; at the very least, preferential treatment of the FRG vis-a-vis the GDR is precluded. It would also be consistent with the previous Soviet position for them to attempt to fashion a closer and more specific channel for subordinating the Council to the UN Economic and Social Council; but the Soviets will probably shy away from fighting a losing battle, if that is the way it

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seems to be turning out. Judging from Issraelyan's reaction, and from Soviet policy on the UN Development Program, for instance, the USSR would probably participate in the Governing Council if the German aspect could be satisfactorily resolved. The Soviets might eventually feel committed to ante up a minimum contribution to the Environment Fund, as well.

As for the establishment of the Environmental Secretariat and Director, the Soviets will probably again be guided by their longstanding opposition to establishment of independent secretariats and directors in any UN body and their general dislike of increased expenditure. They can be expected, therefore, to try to limit the independence of the Secretariat and its director.

One tactic the Soviets may also consider, in furtherance of their several goals, would be a separate resolution that would seek to expand the tie-in between disarmament and environmental protection. Such a course would permit them to boost their favored disarmament topics -- a comprehensive nuclear test ban and a World Disarmament Conference. At the same time, this tie-in would help defer pressure for specific actions and expenditures that the Soviets dislike. The major consideration here, as in most other issues, would probably be the question of how much support such an effort would attract, as opposed to its cost in terms of depicting the Soviets in an obstructionist role.

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